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C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 000425

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE. NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/PASCUAL

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TAGS: KWBG PGOV PREL PTER PHUM KPAL IS

SUBJECT: TERRORIST ATTACK IN JERUSALEM KILLS EIGHT

REF: JERUSALEM 420

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. A terrorist attack at Jerusalem's Mercaz HaRav yeshiva on March 6 left eight students dead and seven wounded. One of the dead was an Amcit, as was one of the wounded. Israeli security has confirmed that the attack was carried out by Ala'a Abu Dhaim from the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Jebal al-Mukabar. Reuters reported March 7 that Hamas claimed responsibility. PA President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) and PM Salam Fayyad publicly condemned the attack shortly after it took place. NSF commander Diab Abu al-Fatah told ConGen Pol Specialist that he had reached out to West Bank IDF commanders on March 7 to coordinate steps to lower tension between settlers and Palestinians in the West Bank. Eshkolot settlement Mayor Tsava Tessler described the attack to Poloff as a "massacre," stressing that Americans would never accept such a terrorist attack in the U.S. End Summary.

¶2. (C) A terrorist attack at Jerusalem's Mercaz HaRav yeshiva on March 6 left eight students dead and seven wounded. One of the dead, Avraham David Moses, a resident of Efrat, and one of the wounded, Naftali Shitrit from Sderot, were Amcits. According to Israeli security contacts, the attack was carried out by Ala'a Abu Dhaim from the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Jebal al-Mukabar. He was shot by an off-duty IDF officer living near the school who responded with a handgun and shot the attacker twice in the head.

PA Condemns Attack, Hamas Blesses It

¶3. (C) PA President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) publicly condemned the attack shortly after it took place. PM Salam Fayyad also issued a statement of condemnation and told the Consul General immediately after the attack that he instructed PA security chiefs to maintain calm in the West Bank.

¶4. (C) Residents of the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Jebal al-Mukabar told ConGen Political Specialist March 7 that Dhaim was an "Islamist." They said the Israeli police arrested eleven of his family members during the night of March 6 and released several, including Dhaim's father, by the following morning. Dhaim's family opened their home March 7 to receive condolences, and neighborhood residents said the family expects to receive Dhaim's body after one week.

¶5. (U) In Gaza, several Hamas spokesmen publicly blessed the attack shortly after it took place. Hamas member Sami Abu Zuhri told press that the attack is a "reaction to the Israeli massacres in Gaza" and Hamas' military wing Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades announced that this will not be the

last attack. Celebratory gunfire was reported in Gaza on March 6 after the attack. On March 7 Reuters reported that Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack on the yeshiva.

PASF on High Alert

16. (C) On March 7, NSF commander Diab Abu al-Fatah told ConGen Political Specialist that Abu Mazen and PM Salam Fayyad issued clear instructions to PASF to prevent any friction between West Bank settlers and Palestinians. Abu al-Fatah said he reached out to West Bank IDF commanders early March 7 to coordinate on these steps to reduce tensions.

Settlers Call Attack "Massacre"

17. (C) Mayor of Eshkolot settlement Tsava Tessler told Poloff March 7 that the attack on the Yeshiva, which is associated with the settler movement, is "hard and painful, but sadly it's a part of life in Israel." She added, "Hamas does not frighten us." Describing the attack as a "massacre," Tessler stressed that Americans would never accept such a terrorist attack in the U.S. She reported a slight increase in security near Eshkolot, emphasizing, however, that the residents of Eshkolot are "just trying to live life normally."

WALLES